

# National Indian Youth Council, Inc.

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JIM PIERCE

Winter 1977

Dear Friend,

Government legislation is about to destroy 58,000 acres of grazing land and consume 479 billion gallons of precious and scarce water. This mindless legislation proposes a reckless scheme to build the nation's first six commercial coal gasification plants. These untested plants are to be built in a concentrated area of the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. Each plant will cost \$1 billion. Each plant will be obsolete in 25 years or less.

The whole plan just doesn't make sense. First, it represents a Band-Aid approach to America's energy problem, but it's also a planned invasion of Navajo natural resources. It will only give labor to a few of the Indians--a doubtful benefit, considering the inevitable losses to the whole life and posterity of the tribe. Second, coal gasification would steal water from the Indian Irrigation Project--a 110,000 acre, tribally owned and operated farm that the U.S. government promised the tribe 107 years ago. This project was only 10% operational this past spring. Moreover, \$206 million of your and our tax dollars have already been committed to the Irrigation Project. Even this may soon become a futile investment, because predicted water shortages will force severe cutbacks in food production, which is sorely needed by both the Indians and other Americans.

Those six gasification plants would consume much of the water reserved for the Irrigation Project. They will emit enormous amounts of deadly toxic materials--lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic, boron--which will settle over and ruin the land, contaminate food produce, endanger lives and, ultimately, force the evacuation of all people within a 13 mile radius.

Western coal costs approximately \$2.00 a ton to mine, the mining companies will sell the gasification coal for \$4.50 a ton. The Navajo Tribe will be paid as low as fifteen cents a ton for this coal.

El Paso Natural Gas Company and Western Gasification Company (WESCO) will make the profit, but the consumer and taxpayer will pay for it all. Every dollar spent on the development of strip mines and gasification plants is another dollar that will not be spent on permanent and non-destructive alternate energy sources.

If this program is permitted realization, it will set off a chain reaction of land-grabbing precedents throughout the mountain and plains states. In every case, Indian Reservations are planned to be the first targets of

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NIYC ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

exploitation. The second targets are the public lands held in trust by the government for the American people. Hundreds of thousands of agricultural acres will be ripped up and rendered useless and ugly by strip mining and pollutants. And if this dangerous combination of procedures must be tested, why, we ask, should it begin on Indian farm and grazing lands when, it is well known, two-thirds of the known coal reserves are available elsewhere in the country?

The people most directly affected by gasification--the Navajo Indians--know it will endanger their promised Irrigation Project and threaten their way of life for generations to come. The Reservation will be forced to accept unmanageable boom towns already on the drawing boards. In 25 years, when the investment is paid off and the profits pocketed--the coal and the water gone--the remains will be a wasteland. Nuclear bombing or chemical warfare couldn't be more effective to render land useless.

The Navajo Irrigation Project will last as long as food is needed. It's the prudent choice for the Indians now and later, the best choice for all Americans now and later.

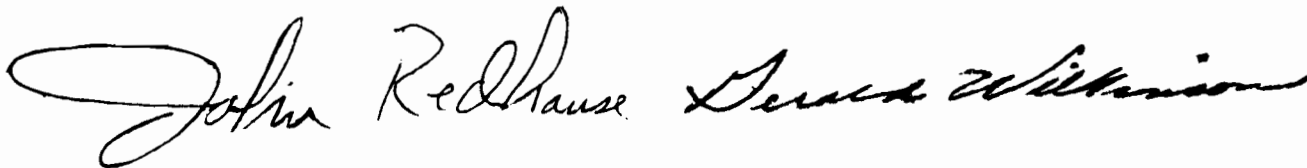
The National Indian Youth Council has been initiating action on most of the major Indian survival issues since its inception, fifteen years ago. It has worked quietly and effectively to eliminate the discrimination and abuses continually suffered by Indian people. And now NIYC is actively fighting against what is to be the largest corporate exploitation ever of Indian lands and resources. Your utility bills will be used to finance this agenda of agricultural destruction and the twentieth-century genocide of American Indian people.

We are up against giants, who have millions to spend for lobbying, public relations and legal counsel. We have the commitment, but need your support to enable us to do the research, testimony, publication and field work required at each step of the long struggle before us. We must protect our lands and water: it is all we have, all that we can leave to our children and theirs who come after them.

So we ask you to do two things--First, read the enclosed letter, and if you feel as we do, please sign it. Second, return the signed letter in the enclosed envelope with the largest possible contribution. Twenty-five dollars will do a lot, any contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Kindly write your check payable to NIYC today. Our needs are urgent!

Thank you, My friend,



John Redhouse  
Navajo  
Associate Director

Gerald Wilkinson  
Cherokee  
Executive Director

P.S. All contributions to NIYC are tax deductible.

# *The National Indian Youth Council Program Opposing Strip Mining and Coal Gasification*



THE ONLY MAN-MADE OBJECT *GEMINI* ASTRONAUTS COULD SEE FROM SPACE WAS POLLUTION FROM THE FOUR CORNERS POWER PLANT NEAR FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO.  
EACH OF THE PROPOSED PLANTS WE ARE OPPOSING WILL BE SEVERAL TIMES LARGER.

## **Scientific Research**

NIYC is actively researching the following areas that are relevant to the gasification issue . . .

- The availability of water in the San Juan river
- The effects of the toxic emissions from the proposed gasification plants on people, livestock, land, vegetation and the atmosphere
- The destruction of Navajo culture which will be caused by gasification plants and resultant reservation Boom Towns

The results of this research will be used for expert testimony in the courts and at public hearings. We desperately need more scientific and technical data to reinforce our original findings.

## **Litigation**

At present NIYC has only two full-time attorneys and one legal secretary. They deal not only with the gasification issue, but with all other legal issues with which NIYC is engaged. To move forward will require at least three full-time attorneys, three legal secretaries and three legal researchers . . .

To institute legal actions to protect the rights of individual Navajos displaced from their homes and landholdings

To challenge the adequacy of Environmental Impact Statements

To challenge the legality of Department of the Interior water allocations

To prepare the groundwork for these long legal battles requires thousands of hours for . . .

- Legal research
- Drafting complaints
- Preparation of expert testimony
- Writing briefs
- Administrative appeals

## **Community Organizing**

Navajo community organizing must meet unique requirements. Navajo is not traditionally a written language. About one-third of the people on the Reservation do not read or write English. To be effective, NIYC needs to . . .

- Print materials in both Navajo and English
- Use radio extensively for communication (in both languages)
- Develop and present special audio-visual programs

NIYC has established field offices on the Navajo Reservation and we are utilizing our teams of bilingual (Navajo-English) field workers to . . .

- Go into the affected areas to inform the people on this issue
- Organize at the grass root level
- Conduct a full scale petition drive, so the people will be heard

### **Spreading the Word**

NIYC has and must continue to prepare and transmit information nationally through the various media, radio, T.V., newspapers and pamphlets. We need to reach millions of people throughout this nation, both Indian and non-Indian.

### **Please Help**

We are up against giants who have millions to spend for lobbying, public relations and legal counsel. We have the commitment and the energy but it also takes money. NIYC estimates it will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars for the next several years. Please help us *WIN* this battle . . .

- \$50 lets us print 5,000 pamphlets
- \$100 sends one of our organizers into the field for *ten* days
- \$500 supplies one day of expert testimony in court
- \$1,000 enables us to develop an audio-visual package for community organizing
- \$5,000 supports one essential water-engineering study to challenge corporate contentions on water availability

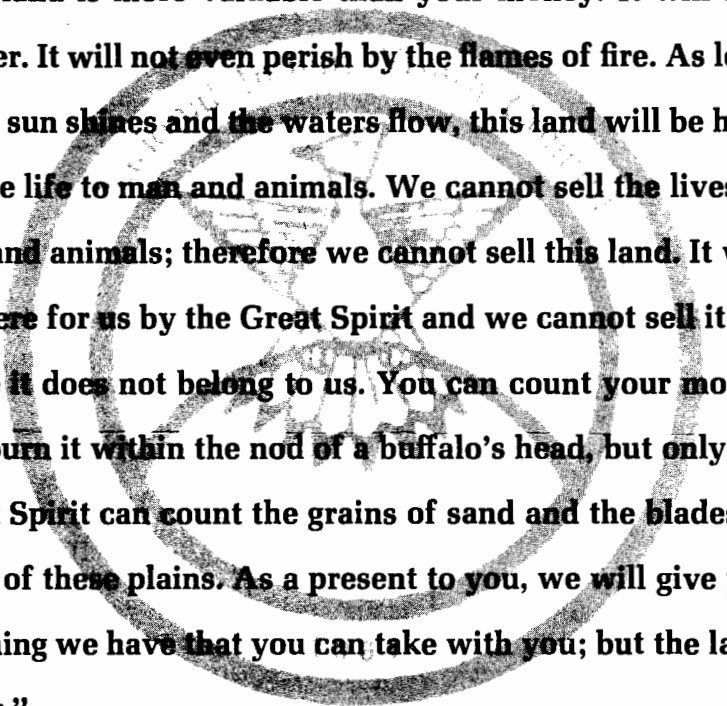
The NIYC is 15 years old. Since its founding by ten Indian young people in Gallup, New Mexico, it has spread across the country to a membership of 15,000, with 55 chapters. NIYC is a source of identity and strength to Indian people.

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Recent studies indicate that there were between 9½ and 12 million Indian people living above the current Mexican border before Columbus. In 1970, however, the United States census takers could only count up to 800,000 survivors in this country.

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*The cost of removing duplication is prohibitive. If you receive more than one copy of this appeal, you can help NIYC by passing the extra copies on to your friends or relatives who may be interested.*



**“Our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not even perish by the flames of fire. As long as the sun shines and the waters flow, this land will be here to give life to man and animals. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals; therefore we cannot sell this land. It was put here for us by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not belong to us. You can count your money and burn it within the nod of a buffalo’s head, but only the Great Spirit can count the grains of sand and the blades of grass of these plains. As a present to you, we will give you anything we have that you can take with you; but the land, never.”**

**Blackfeet Chief, Recorded in a  
19th Century Treaty Council**

**Dear National Indian Youth Council,**

Please forward the enclosed letter which I have signed to the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Interior.

Thank you

**To the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Interior.**

I am writing to you today because I do not want the proposed gasification plants to become another blot on my conscience as a United States citizen. I do not want another part of the continent ripped beyond recognition, like the desolation already visited upon Appalachia, in order to satisfy the greed of the few who do profit.

American pride and independence cannot be achieved by expropriation of those natural resources we hold in *trust*, which we are treaty-bound to protect, solemnly, from even ourselves. American good faith and goals can be better pursued if the precious water of the San Juan River were used to make fertile those sections of Indian land readied for the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project that was promised in their Treaty of 1868. This would give food for all people.

I want to go on record against the inevitable genocide of those Indians whose rights, dignity and livelihoods will be once again trampled and ignored. Their ancestors have farmed or raised stock on these acres for hundreds of years. I am writing because I believe the wisdom at the core of our Constitution and government is still intact and not just the bureaucratic shell. And I expect you care, as I do, for the moral and spiritual health of all American peoples.

Finally, I ask that you and your tax-paid staff share these concerns with the proper parties at the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Federal Power Commission, the Civil Rights Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Please write me what you are now doing to stop this proposed genocide.

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

(Please Print)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



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